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ABSTRACT

One of a series of six portraits of high school literature classrooms, this paper gives a detailed, evocative characterization of how one "master teacher" introduced, undertook, and guided the study of literature, focusing in particular on how the teacher interacted with students in the context of discussion of a literary work in class. The paper recounts how a teacher-researcher observed an instructional unit of literature by (1) conducting taped interviews with the teacher as well as with his students; (2) gathering lesson plans, study guidelines, and assignments related to the instructional units to be observed; (3) making videotapes of the classes involved; and finally (4) writing a narrative account of what had been observed in the class and what its significance appeared to be. The paper describes eleventh and twelfth graders in a suburban, upstate New York high school in a course in Mythology studying the play "Antigone." The paper discusses the teacher's role as mentor and guide, his experience and adeptness at making the myriad decisions a teacher must make in class, his alertness to students which allows him to make split-second changes in a lesson plan in order to adapt it to students' interests and concerns, and his researching and experimenting to find teaching styles and strategies that work for him. (SR)

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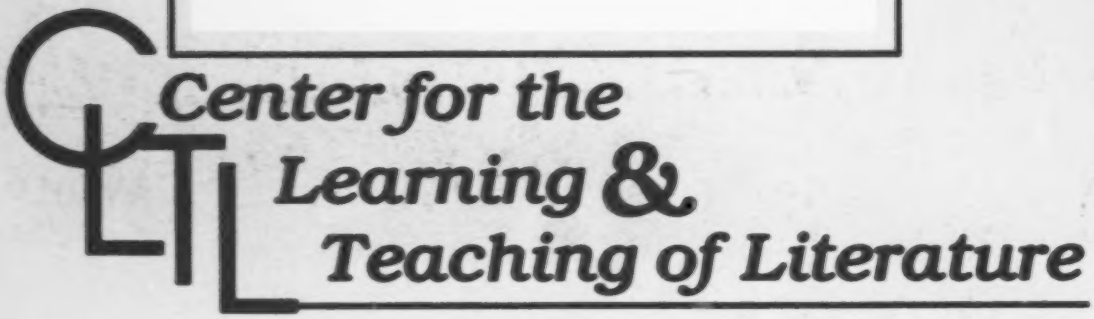
The Teacher as Mentor-Guide: Joe Allen on Antigone

Doris Quick



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The Teacher as Mentor-Guide: Joe Allen on Antigone

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Report Series 2.8

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Preface

Overview

The following portrait of a high school literature classroom results from a year-long teacher-research project planned and implemented by a group of high school English teachers from districts in and around Albany, New York. This portrait is one of six produced during the first year of the project, each of which is available separately from the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature. The researchers are themselves all experienced professionals, regarded by colleagues, supervisors, and principals as outstanding literature instructors in their own right. Each of them undertook to observe an instructional unit of another English teacher considered to be equally accomplished in presenting literature to high school students. A unit was defined as the study of a novel, a play, or a sequence of short stories or poems over a period of four to five days. The intent was to compose detailed, evocative characterizations of what particular and well-regarded high school literature teachers actually do in their classrooms.

Each teacher-researcher chose a colleague whose experience and expertise were popularly thought to be exceptional. The researcher conducted taped interviews with the "master teacher," as well as with his or her students, gathered lesson plans, study guidelines, and assignments related to the instructional units to be observed, and made videotapes of the classes involved. Each researcher discussed and studied these materials with the teacher during the observation phase of the project and with the other researchers in the analysis phase. Throughout the study, the researchers also continually reviewed their evolving interpretations of materials with project coordinators. Finally, each wrote a narrative account of what she or he had seen and what its significance appeared to be, preparing the account through several drafts, until themes and details emerged that seemed to the members of the project team and to the master teacher to provide an authentic rendering of the classroom experience.

Goals and Methods

The question directing the research was this: How do the best high school English teachers introduce, undertake, and guide the study of literature in their classrooms? Plainly, there are nettlesome prior questions lurking here: What does "best" mean? What are the criteria for excellence? Who gets to say so? What does "literature" entail? But the concern of the project was to find out what teachers who are perceived to be successful actually do, the ways in which they do it, and the explanations they may offer for their practices. The attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that might underlie perceptions of excellence were not an immediate concern, although the portraits that finally emerged of good teachers in action certainly direct attention to what the normal criteria of successful literature instruction are thought to be at the present time. Nor was the theoretically vexed question of what constitutes literature an immediate issue, though the texts that various teachers chose for their classes represent statements about what literature is thought to include in the context of high school curricula today.

The master teachers of the study were selected simply by appeal to local knowledge: The researchers, all veteran educators in the Albany area, asked themselves and others which local

high school English teachers have the most established reputations in literature instruction according to colleagues, supervisors, and students. There was no a priori critique of these public perceptions; instead, taken at face value, they were regarded as reliable indicators of the current, commonsense understanding of what makes for quality of instruction. The literary text that formed the basis of class work in each instance was the choice of the teacher or program involved, reflecting, at least as far as the project was concerned, the normal, current sense of appropriate reading material for a particular grade level in Albany-area communities.

The research question was restricted to focus primarily on how a successful teacher interacts with students in the context of discussion of a literary work during class. Hence, less attention was directed to activities such as reading aloud or lecturing on background information, for instance, except insofar as they set up and conditioned opportunities for class discussion. Nor was much attention paid to those portions of class time devoted to routine business matters, "visiting" before and after class, or disciplinary and other regulatory actions, except, once again, to the extent that they might affect the character of discussion.

Naturally, the question "What constitutes 'discussion'?" and the related question "When is 'discussion' going on?" were persistent concerns, by no means easily dispatched. Initially, the researchers were prone to conceive discussion in their own favorite terms, which for one meant little or no teacher involvement, for another involvement but not direction, for still another, lecture or controlled questioning interspersed with student responses. Eventually, members of the research group agreed that discussion was properly whatever a particular master teacher said it was within his or her own classroom.

Researchers and teachers agreed in advance on the units of instruction that would be observed. During preclass interviews, each researcher asked about the reasons for choosing particular texts, what the teacher hoped to accomplish on each class day, what she or he expected of the students, and what assignments would support in-class work. The researcher also asked about the teacher's views of literature, literary study, and teaching. Following these interviews, arrangements were made to videotape classes in which discussion would be a primary activity and to observe but not to videotape other classes in which lecture, reading aloud, or other business would predominate (during these sessions researchers took notes only). Interestingly, no classes featured more time spent on lecture than on discussing the text: student involvement of one kind or another was a consistent feature of the six classrooms. After each class, another meeting enabled the researcher and teacher to review portions of videotape, go over written notes, and discuss perceptions (on both sides) of what happened and why. The research group believed it was important to richness of perception that the teachers have the fullest opportunity to react to the tapes, comment on their practices, explain them in any way that seemed valuable, and react to the impressions that the researcher had formed of class activities.

Since there was no intent to evaluate or critique instructional practices or to view them from some other stance of privileged objectivity, teachers felt free to be candid about what worked and what didn't. Since the researchers were high school teachers themselves, they were able to display the perceptual judgment tempered by generosity that frequently characterizes those who have "been there" and who understand the obligations but also the difficulties of

classroom work. The researchers knew the teachers as responsible professionals; the teachers trusted the researchers to tell their stories honestly.

The researchers and project coordinators spent considerable time exploring the epistemological and hermeneutic questions that surround practices of observing and writing about complex human settings. Everyone acknowledged the necessarily interpretive nature of classroom observation, the influence of a researcher's perspective, the impact of a camcorder's presence, location, focus, and movement on what is seen, the selectivity and slant of field notes, the necessary but simplifying reduction of experiential detail to judgments, characterizations, and conclusions--in general the interrelationship between observer and object observed as it is finally constituted in the textual record of some experience. The aim was to achieve what Clifford Geertz has called "thick description," a narrative rendering of classroom reality, its ambiguities all intact, not a model, statistical average, or other purified representation of "what happened." The teacher-researchers shared a pervasive self-consciousness about interpretation, a desire to offer richness of detail in place of clearcut generalities, a concern for discussing "readings" of the classroom with the largest possible number of people (the teacher and students involved as well as the other researchers and the coordinators of the project), a determination to write narratives about teachers' practices rather than conventional research reports, an emphasis on "storyteller," "theme," "plot," and "character," more typical of literary study than of empirical research. In this instance, researchers and teachers collaborated to create stories of classroom life: their viewpoints converge and diverge in intricate ways which the resulting narratives do not attempt to conceal. The researchers are narrators who do not seek to render themselves invisible in what they write, whose voices are distinctive and important to the meaningfulness of the stories. The teachers and students are characters who come to life according to the ways in which they have been conceived by the narrators. Each story is organized--has plot--according to the themes that emerged for each narrator over the course of observation and talk. Following is one teacher-researcher's narrative. The others are also available as Literature Center reports.

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The Teacher as Mentor-Guide:
Joe Allen on Antigone

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One day when the groups of six teachers who wrote this study were discussing our stories and how we would understand them, Roseanne DeFabio, who wrote the account of Karen Phillips, said there were many ways to know an event. Take the Vietnam War, for example. One way to know it was to listen to the body counts. She asked, "But what does that really tell us about the people who fought, or their families, or the Vietnamese people?" I thought about that. Apparently we may know an event by quantifying it, by counting the bodies or some other such element; we might have been there fighting and we would have our own perspective; we might watch a docudrama on television and have a view from the television writer; we might watch a fictionalized version like the film, "The Deerslayer"; or finally, we might have the writings of a competent reporter who was there, who talked to fighting men, who shared experiences and observations from a personal vantage point.

I decided this last stance would be mine as I tell the story of this experienced teacher and his journey through the play, Antigone, with a group of eleventh and twelfth graders of average and above average ability. I will be an experienced observer/reporter, experienced because of my many years of teaching and my 14 years of being Joe's colleague and department chair. I will trace for you Joe's goals and expectations for his course in Mythology, for this unit on Antigone, his frustrations, the reactions of the students, and his and my assessment of how the unit and its activities went. As I have been thinking about this report, I find I am particularly interested in two aspects: 1) the decisions that an experienced teacher, or any teacher for that matter, makes. Some of these decisions are carefully thought out and others are instinctively and routinely made on the spot, and 2) the way students work in small collaborative discussion groups. How does the teacher handle the tension between having high expectations for students' achievement and wanting them to be masters of their own learning?

First a little background. Joe Allen is a teacher of Latin and English with 18 years of experience in our suburban up-state New York high school of about 1150 students in Grades 9 through 12. Joe's academic background is heavily laced with classical studies. He is, in fact, an intellectual, albeit a quiet, unassuming one. Interestingly, both he and his wife are graduates of our school and have extended families that have resided in the community for generations and still live here. Occasionally, nephews and cousins of Joe's go through our doors. By coincidence, a nephew of Joe's is a student in the class we are observing. All of this seems important to me because it means that Joe is closely in touch with the community, its feelings, its expectations for students. He feels that our parents hope their children will achieve excellence in some field in school. It might be sports or drama or student government; it need not necessarily be in academic areas. In addition, Joe feels our parents hope their children will exceed their (the parents') achievements. Joe lives in the community and has children of his own in our school system. Further, his long association with our community helps to give him his authority in the classroom. Older brothers and sisters of these students have had Joe as a teacher and have passed on stories that enhance his reputation as an excellent, knowledgeable,

teacher and have passed on stories that enhance his reputation as an excellent, knowledgeable, and fair teacher-guide through the literature. Certainly, a teacher does not have to be a member of the community to be accepted immediately as the authority in the classroom, but this is one way, and it explains, I think, why this class accepts Joe as leader without question although, as we will see later, this is, for them, like the first day of school.

He designed the one-semester Mythology elective we are observing. His goals for the course are for students to understand mythic characters, motifs, and themes and to apply this understanding to the literature he chooses for study, to later literature, and to the students' own lives. Students begin the course by examining the Greek gods and goddesses, a unit that builds on a ninth grade unit they have studied two years previously. They go on to doing individual reports on Greek and Roman heroes like Odysseus, Oedipus, Orpheus, Hercules, Aeneas, Romulus and Remus, Theseus, Perseus, and others. They read some modern interpretations of myths as well. For example, this class has just finished reading The King Must Die, a modern novel by Mary Renault about the life, journeys, and trials of Theseus. Joe chooses the literature, not because it is or is not a "classic" (although he is "delighted" if a work he decides to teach is a classic "for reasons that have to do with upholding standards") but because the work has "universal statements for the kids' lives, situations that speak to the kids' lives and speak to the elective." He has been influenced in these goals by his middle school daughter whom he has observed learning 20 to 30 isolated facts for her tests each week. "This caused me to hold the mirror up a little...to see if I get enough analysis from kids. I don't want them to learn isolated facts unless they can apply them to their own lives."

Before the Reading

The first lesson we observe and videotape is the introductory lesson to Antigone. The class of 26 students is meeting in the television studio for videotaping. There are two cameras mounted on tables staring down at them. They are in rows, seemingly crowded together, almost elbow-to-elbow. This is the Monday after spring vacation. It is also the first time Joe has faced this class as its teacher, since a student teacher has been teaching from the beginning of the semester. Although students have learned some of the routines and expectations in this class from the student teacher, it is really more like the first day in September, that time when students and teachers begin to know each other, begin to feel out what the trip is going to be like in this class, who's going to be in charge, who sets the travel plans, how am I as a student supposed to react, what do I do to get a good grade, what does he want? Joe stands before them, seemingly formal in a suit and tie.

He begins by calling attention to the TV cameras, a decision some teachers might not have made, preferring to ignore the cameras hoping they would go away. But Joe, sensing perhaps the students' discomfort and wariness, tells them, "You have noticed the two TV cameras which will be filming us for a week as we work on our unit on Antigone. The optimal situation is that we will be working in our groups so that you will be able to shut out the fact that there are people focusing on all of us." I noticed that this is a "we're-all-in-this-together" feeling he's creating. "We" will work. They are "our" groups.

He asks students to begin by thinking back over the units they have done so far. Remember that this is the Monday after spring break, and experienced teachers know that students return to school anesthetized. They have no capability of remembering back over the units they have done before Myrtle Beach or wherever they have sunned. They are asked to

focus on the women they have read about in mythology that they admire. He points out that in this unit, they will be focusing on the role of women in Greek myth. "Would you just jot down a bit about the person (you admire), a line or two and then what you admire about them? Just give that a minute's thought and then start on your journal." Students take out their journals and write dutifully although one or two can be seen glancing shyly at the camera. They seem accustomed to this activity of journal writing; there is no problem finding the journal, nobody needs a pencil, they write without complaint or question.

After a time that seemed longer than needed to write a line or two, Joe asks students to stop. He must have sensed that they needed a fair amount of think-time and decided to give it to them. When he asks for women they admire, students volunteer one-word answers and do not give admirable qualities. It seems strained. In spite of the writing-to-get-ready, students' answers are not flowing freely. One student mentions the vacation and Joe acknowledges that it presents a problem and continues on his appointed rounds quickly. After a few more offerings, Joe apparently decides to take a step backwards: he asks for the names of women from the myths they had read and suggests, "At this point we're not deciding whether we admire them or not. We're just coming up with names." Perhaps that should have been the first step: name the women, identify the admirable ones, tell why. He decides to encourage them with, "The names are there. We just need to dredge them up a little bit. They're buried under the Myrtle Beach sand." Once a list is established on the blackboard, Joe asks what qualities made women admirable in Greek society, and after some prodding, determines that integrity, good looks, and faithfulness to a husband were admired. He tries to make the point that those are not 1980s criteria, "Are these the same criteria that we use today?" There is a long pause with no response, so Joe offers the observation that "You might have some different criteria." In the absence of student response, he goes on to the next planned activity.

Students are asked to fill out a survey about gender roles in our society, such things as changing diapers and voting for females for President. Students are to decide whether they would be likely to undertake any given activity, whether some were appropriate for only men, others for only women, if some were appropriate for both. There were some procedural questions from students, and one of the three students named Mark asked Freud's question, "How am I supposed to know what a woman wants. Just guess?" Joe takes the comment seriously and suggests that the student do his best to offer an opinion, but if he in honesty cannot, leave the item blank. Joe collects the surveys and promises to return them.

He did in fact study them later and came to some startling conclusions about students' gender expectations. For example, he found that, "I think they were being fairly straight and there seemed to be quite a few stereotypical reactions. I had nine boys who felt that diapers should be changed only by girls. Even more distressing, I had 12 people who felt that being president was a male prerogative, although I did have one girl who thought only a female could be president. I kept track separately of the male and female responses." However, in the small group discussions, he found as he moved around: "movement. With the survey, they were isolated. They were by themselves or with their buddy who probably shared a similar value next to them. But when they got into their small groups, I found one of my sexists agreeing that maybe a husband should start helping with chores around the house. He would be willing to try it if it meant saving a marriage. I checked in on the discussion to make sure that they were really convincing him and that he wasn't just going along with it so that he wouldn't be the odd man out."

For Joe, then, the small discussion groups are an important part of the class dynamic. He explained that he is researching collaborative learning for a graduate course he is taking, and he is trying it out in the classroom. "The more I read and the more I try it in the classroom, (I am convinced) my place in the classroom had better be that of facilitator, and that the responsibility of the student and text had better be together. If they the students aren't making their choices, and if they aren't finding the meaning in the text, then if I stand up there with answers for them, it's going to be meaningless."

The final directions were for students to meet in their prearranged writing groups which, in fact, also function as discussion groups for literature. Each group was given a series of problems involving men and women and was asked to come to consensus about how to resolve them. An example of the problems was the case of the wife being offered a high paying job in another city. Should the husband move to support her career? The class comes alive, relaxes. This seems more like a typical Joe Allen class, one I had earlier described as "the most organized chaos and wildly enthusiastic class I have seen in secondary school." The background noise from the videotape shows that the kids are on task. They are indeed talking about the issues involved. They do not question Joe's authority by asking, "Why are we doing this?" It is accepted that he knows where he is going and he will guide them along the way. Joe walked around from group to group now that the furniture was no longer in rows, exhorting some, "I expect perfect consensus from this group" to the only all-female group; insisting on integrity from others, "Remember that one of the admirable qualities we identified was integrity. Make sure you keep your integrity in your group and not let the others lead you toward a solution that you don't buy. If you don't agree with that solution yourself, don't let them write it up"; encouraging others, "Just relax"; keeping it light with still others, "Wes doesn't sound like that kind of guy."

As a closure activity, Joe had the groups report their solutions and discuss them briefly. The bell rang and a vocabulary study sheet was handed out by the student teacher as students filed out of the room.

Joe took the videotape home that night to view. He told me the next day that he thought the lesson was "ghastly." His daughter, Kristin, soon to be an eighth grader, said that the students looked pained. As I watched the film, I decided she was right. In talking it over with Joe, it seems the presence of the cameras, the fact that Joe was a "new" teacher, and it being the day after spring break contributed to a somewhat plodding class at least in the initial activities. Personally, I thought the survey activity and the small-group discussion helped students to relax, but Joe was harsher on himself. There are two interesting things to notice: 1) how does an experienced teacher know when things are not going well, and 2) what does he do to remedy the situation?

Joe told me he knows discussion is going well when he can feel it in his gut, when his energy level is up, when students are giving more than simple one-word responses. Apparently, viewing the tape pointed up the fact that students seemed to be groping for one-word answers, and I judge from his attitude the next day that his energy level was drained. What did he do about it? Typical for Joe, he decided to confront the issue head on. He made a decision that the class would forego the taping on day #3 in favor of meeting in the regular classroom to regroup, regain confidence, and get pumped up again as mythology students. At that meeting, he showed the students the videotape and joshed them about their pained expressions.

During the Reading

After the warm-up before show time, Joe begins the second day's lesson with a review of the myth of Oedipus which students have been exposed to in their earlier heroes unit. He leads them through a review of the facts and makes the point there is "no focus on the woman. The focus is on the man throughout the myth. In the play that we are going to start today, we are going to take a look at the people who are going to pick up the pieces now that Jocaste is dead and Oedipus has gouged out his eyes and handed over the throne. For a while the throne is passed on to Creon, but our obvious questions would revolve around what character?"

The students respond in unison: "The kids." They mean Antigone, Ismene, Polyneices, and Eteocles. Joe takes them quickly through a review of the background myth, helps them anticipate some of the problems that might occur when two brothers agree to take turns as king. He decided to begin by having parts read aloud and says: "We're going to need some volunteers for parts." He describes the parts needed and explains a bit about the chorus and the function of choragos. No response. He joshes them: "Many parts available!" No response. He tells them that all parts are played by males and fills in more detail about the Greek theater, ending with, "So anybody can volunteer for parts." No response. He waits. I know I would have started button-holing kids I know could handle a sight reading, but he waits, will not compromise with his promise that people would volunteer. Finally a girl says she will read Antigone. A male volunteers for Ismene to the delight of the class. A girl will be the sentry. Joe encourages, "Great part! Great selection!" He jokes, "Volunteer early or I will get stuck with a large part." Finally, he manages to get the parts assigned. I suspect student reluctance to read is related to the camera again since students usually love to read aloud and be read to. Joe reads Creon, strongly, resonantly, energetically. I was surprised by this dramatic reading from a teacher usually so laid-back. I noticed that all students have their texts, another example, I think, of their acceptance of Joe as authority in the classroom, an acceptance that is given without his having to demand it in a heavy-handed way.

After a brief reading, he asks students to stop there and take out their journals. "React to the two sisters. Put down a line about Ismene and Antigone. You might want to pull a quote from the opening that you feel characterizes Ismene, a line that may represent her. When you're done with that, I want you to ask a question about what's coming up in the play. What do you want to know about the play? What might be in store for us in the play?" Again, students write willingly and dutifully in their journals. They sense that this is important, it will add up to something, it is something they will do.

Joe leads a brief discussion of the characters of Ismene and Antigone, having students use their journals as data. They project questions about the relationships between the sisters: will Ismene change her mind and help her sister? Will Antigone learn to hate her sister? Joe ties these questions to yesterday's activity with, "Very good. We have to look at the dynamics among these characters. What we were talking about yesterday in terms of families and women's ability to act in certain scenarios."

The reading continues, with Joe doing a strong Creon. After a bit, he suggests, "Now that we've seen Creon, do the same thing. Just a line or two describing him in your journals. Your impression of Creon, maybe pulling a line from that intro. How would you characterize Creon? Then, again, now that we've seen that side of the story, a question that you have about the future of the play." And students write. Joe's decision to use the student journals involves

the students actively in the learning and is consistent with his philosophy that the students have to invest the text with their own meanings. It does, of course, slow the class down. It would be possible to cover this material much faster if the responsibility for summing up characterization and for anticipating outcomes rested with the teacher instead of with the students as Joe prefers.

For the next class, the students are to read scenes two and three at home. They are reminded that they will be meeting in their own classroom.

It is my profound regret that I didn't videotape the third lesson although I certainly respected Joe's decision to have students return to their own familiar surroundings for a respite. A remarkable coincidence occurred.

Joe described the class for me. "Pete wasn't present. Someone else brought up the fact that Pete was not in class because he was expelled. And someone else said, 'Why?' And we got into the whole issue of his being expelled because he had gone off school grounds and would not be back for three days. And since the play at hand dealt with justice, we went into a discussion of that." I expressed amazement when Joe and I talked. Quick as a bunny, right on his feet, Joe saw the connection between the incident the students wanted to talk about and the play they were reading, and he decided to capitalize on it. He saw that this was this class's way into the text.

Last semester had taken quite a different turn, he explained. "It turned out that when we were doing our surveys on sexism, we had a fighting class. I had a girl who had already signed up for the military. She was going to be a marine. And a boy was in the class who didn't feel women should be in the military, and as they started to discuss they got involved with it. And at that point I made the decision to let them go based on the interchange between Haimon and Creon. And they replicated it. It was perfect. They went through the same levels of discussion: he started to attack the person instead of her idea. By the end they were threatening each other. At that point I did stop it. But our focus in Antigone last semester was on the Haimon-Creon interchange more than on the justice situation because it grew out of the needs of the class. I spoke to the kids afterward and asked them if they would mind if I used them as examples, and they were both strong enough personalities that they allowed it. So the next day we talked about that in terms of arguments and arguments at home and the argument with Creon and Haimon. With this semester's class, since the issue of justice came up, I focused on that."

Joe characterizes his role in this kind of decision as being like a cook making spaghetti sauce. "You can use the same ingredients every time, but it never tastes exactly the same way twice." Here we have text, teacher, and students as ingredients and yet they blend in different ways depending on students' expressed interests. I think he understates his role, however. Later, when I watch him conducting a large group discussion, I realize it may look like he is merely stirring the spaghetti sauce and taking a "let's see what happens" attitude, but he is far more engaged and on top of things than that. He makes it look easy, but those of us who have taught know it is not.

After some class discussion of Pete's being expelled, Joe asked for students to suggest other non-fictional figures who stood up for decisions they thought were right. Students identified: Martin Luther King, Pete, the Vietnam draft evaders, and Gandhi. Volunteers were

identified to do a bit of research on one of the protesters and to report tomorrow on the nature of the decision that the person made, the punishment he received, and the apparent justice or injustice of the punishment. A jury was selected to decide if the various punishments seemed fair. Notice that this activity did not appear anywhere in a lesson plan. This is, do doubt, one earmark of the experienced, well-read, well-prepared teacher. He can make decisions on his feet with absolute confidence. He knows the text so thoroughly he can go in any one of a number of ways. Joe agreed that he is capable of multiple interpretations, although I suspect he (and all of us) has a preferred reading. "As a teacher, I'm expecting kids to see more than one side of an issue. Then I'd better be open enough to do that as well." How does he prepare himself for class if he is to be that flexible? "I guess probably the foremost thing in my mind is rereading the piece of literature. Sometimes taking in mind the class, I'll take a look at secondary criticism to see if there are other perspectives I may be missing."

The class continued to read and discuss the play and was expected to have the play read by Friday, the last planned class.

The fourth class, Thursday's class, begins again with a bit of a warm-up. Joe kids the class: "Get rid of the pained look. Now do one pained look for the camera." Students grimace. "Kathy, get rid of it. Wave hi to Mom." Some students waved shyly. I am astonished sometimes at how obedient young people are.

The students are in the TV studio, but today the chairs are arranged in a large circle. They are still crowded and some students sit on stools since there are not enough student desks. While they still look cramped, they do not this time look uncomfortable. They are at ease, rather relaxed, but ready to go. Joe now is in shirtsleeves, and when the student reports begin and the discussion ensues, he sits in the circle with the students. He chooses a chair next to Alex, who seems to be the class clown, the class goof off. Joe chats easily and informally with him at odd moments, like when the jury is voting. He is drawing him into this class and making him feel part of it and worthwhile, worth this attention he is getting from his teacher.

The lesson per se begins with students being asked to react in their journals to a Martin Luther King quotation, "I was proud of my crime. It was the crime of joining my people in a non-violent protest against injustice. It was the crime of seeking to instill within my people a sense of dignity and self respect. It was above all the crime of seeking to convince my people that non-cooperation with evil is just as much a moral duty as cooperation with good." Joe had searched for a quote to direct student thinking back to the issues of justice and Antigone and to connect with the previous discussion of Pete's expulsion from school. Students write for what seemed like 10 or 12 minutes seemingly without any difficulty generating ideas.

Directions for the next activity are given. "I wanted you to focus on Martin Luther King because yesterday as we started talking about people who have broken the law in the past for reasons they thought were reputable, his was one of the names, and as we prepare today our presentations to the jury (the group of six students who had been selected yesterday), we'll have some discussion based on your journals and what Mark tells us. Then we'll let the jury vote, and then we'll decide how we as a class would decide."

I am struck by the number of ways students are actively involved and responsible for the content of this lesson. The teacher might have decided that background in civil disobedience and its consequences was necessary for an understanding of Antigone. But instead

of bringing in a little lecture, Joe passes off to the students. Four are asked to volunteer to do research in the library and report back, pleading a case for their historical figure. The expelled student is one of the subjects, raising his status from criminal to person rubbing shoulders with Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Six other students are involved as members of a jury charged with the responsibility of judging the guilt or innocence of the non-fictional people and Pete. And the others aren't let off the hook either. They must comment on the jury's decision. The set-up worked. This is a lively and at times heated discussion. I suspect Joe's gut reaction was positive because the issues were charged and ones students could become engaged with. Joe's job seems to be to keep reminding students of the connections of their reports and their discussion with the work under consideration.

I was interested in the discussion of Pete's crime and punishment. Remember, he is not in class, but serving his sentence. Greg reported on Pete's crime of leaving school grounds without permission, not once but twice and getting caught twice. He was punished the second time. Greg, apparently a friend of Pete's at least in class, argued for the jury that Pete was clearly guilty because he knew the rules (Greg cited the exact section of the student code that forbids leaving school grounds without permission, to the other students' delight. He sounded like Perry Mason, very serious, very legal, and they loved it.) and decided to gamble. The jury convicted Pete by a 5-1 vote, but the class went on to describe the illogic of the school rules, the unevenness of justice ("We all do it. Why pick on him?") and the severity of the punishment.

Joe seized on this as an opportunity to pull back and look at the play, to remind them of why they are really discussing these issues and to insert a little vocabulary lesson:

Joe: How would you describe that, your telling someone to leave school as a punishment for leaving school? If you were going to choose a figure of speech to describe it? Pete? (Not the expelled Pete, another Pete.)

Pete: Paradoxical.

Mark: Ironic.

Joe: Yes, it seems paradoxical, a little ironic to punish someone for not coming to school by telling them not to come to school.

Some fairly lengthy discussion ensues, but Joe remembers to nail this point down, for he returns later:

Joe: Does Pete deserve that paradoxical punishment? By the way, have you seen a precedent for paradoxical punishment? People who were punished in...

Student: Antigone was buried alive and her brother wasn't buried at all.

Joe: Great. Antigone was buried alive. The whole issue at hand is that her brother is not buried at all. So we have precedent in history and a piece of literature. So at least the administration is following a literary background here.

Joe used the term paradoxical at least three times in the context of the lesson, reinforcing along the way almost unconsciously. How can we plan for that? How to we explain these skills to new teachers? But onward in our lesson. Let's listen in on one of the more lively parts of the lesson. Greg had volunteered to report on the Vietnam War draft evaders.

Greg: During the Vietnam war, there was a bunch of people called draft dodgers who were against the war and they felt they had a right to decide whether or not they had to go to war if they didn't want to. They felt the government was forcing them to go, to be drafted, when they didn't believe in the cause. So a lot of them went to Canada where the American government couldn't get them. They broke the law by dodging the draft. And they got reprisals from the people who thought it wasn't fair. Most people who get drafted go and fight and some people dodge the draft.

Joe: What side of the issue are you going to take, Greg? Should they be punished or not?

Greg: Yeah.

Joe: Some came back from Canada. If they came back, the authorities could arrest them and put them in jail.

Greg: They're guilty.

Joe: Based on?

Greg: It's not fair for everyone else to go except for a few who decided they didn't want to go. If everybody had a choice, there wouldn't be a military.

Joe: Do you mean everyone doesn't have a choice? (His voice seems to express incredulity.)

Greg: If everyone had a choice about whether they were going to go or not, and there was a war, who'd fight the war?

Brian: If no one wanted the war, if everyone's against the war, maybe the war's not good.

Jean: What's the use of having laws if nobody will follow them?

Watch now at how carefully Joe is listening to student responses. He is actively concerned about their logic, about their ability to argue reasonably, about the hidden attitudes they may be displaying.

Joe: Aren't you the one who voted 'innocent' for Pete? But listen to your logic, Brian. It's OK if the law is immoral. Some of these people are

saying the law is immoral and so if you go back to Martin Luther King, he would say you have a moral obligation to evade the draft if you believe it is morally wrong to fight.

Mark: We have laws, but the laws have to change with society. That's what these people are doing. They are initiating change in their own way. I mean granted you have laws to a certain extent, but is it all black and white?

Joe: Jane, did you have more input on the issue?

Jane: How can individuals decide if a war is immoral or moral?

Joe: What is the choice that they were making? Let's get to that.

Tom: To go to Canada?

Here, he reshapes a student answer, validating it and using it to move the discussion forward.

Joe: OK. Whether to fight the war. Were they making that decision for the entire army?

Tom: No.

Joe: For whom are they making a decision?

Students: For themselves.

Joe: And doesn't the person who chooses to go to war make that same decision? Greg, be careful. You made a decision to be here, right?

Alex: I didn't.

Joe: Alex, you did. (He seems concerned here. This is a point he really wants to drive home: the idea that students have choices.) You could be out in the hall. You could be in the cafeteria. You made a choice. But you're setting up the standard: "I don't want three days of external suspension, so I'm making a choice to be here."

Greg: If you're drafted, you got no choice.

Joe: The people who went to Canada took a choice.

Mark #2: Why should you get in trouble for something one person did? They made it and they're not doing anything about it. Like the president. He decided to go to war. He's sitting back there while you're going to fight for him. Why shouldn't you have the right to say, 'No, I don't want to' if it's something you don't believe in?

Joe: If one person who was drafted believed it was morally wrong, should he go to war anyway because it was the law?

Students: It depends.

Joe: Depends on what? That's what we need to get to.

Students: The situation.

Whether they need him.

Yeah. The situation.

In your beliefs.

Joe: Those are two different ideas: the situation and your beliefs.

Greg: If the country's in desperate need of men, then yeah. You gotta go.

Joe: So we have to do some things we don't want to do. Does anyone see a different perspective on it?

Jean: Why are they so special? Not everybody can run off.

Mark #2: Are you going to die for something you don't believe in?

Students: Our country.

Melissa: You can believe in a country and not believe in what a country's doing.

Students: It's the wrong war.

Ann: If you want to talk about defending your country, Vietnam is the wrong war.

Joe: Why?

Ann: Because we got involved in a civil war there. We weren't protecting us. They weren't threatening to bomb our cities.

Joe: What's the point of that? In terms of their choice, individual choice?

Students: It wasn't our war.

Mark #2: It wasn't anything to do with us. It was someplace far off.

Lori: They're fighting a war, but not defending our country.

Alex: Wiping out communism so it won't spread.

Here, Joe decides that in fairness to all points of view, he must hear from Alex. Notice how he reshapes Alex's response into an appropriate one.

Joe: Let's get that perspective in, Alex. Why do you think they should have gone?

Alex: Because you're wiping out them little commies.

Joe: Be careful, Alex. You're getting into a Creon/Haimon relationship if you start to call them "little commies." What did Creon do when he started losing the argument? Attack the man instead of the issue. If you think that, give a reason you think they shouldn't have gone.

Alex: (pause) Uh.

Joe: To attack communism wherever it rises. So there's a side.

Alex: (nodding in assent) Yeah.

Joe: (Summing up, getting ready to move on to the next presentation and the jury vote) I hope the point that we will come to is that there can be two sides to an issue. With Antigone we were willing to say she shouldn't be punished. Everyone in the room agreed to that. All she was doing was making an individual moral choice. We now put it in a real situation and some of you are saying, 'No, you don't have a right to make an individual moral choice.' So we need to think of the precedent that Antigone has set for us. We need to examine the individual situation. I'm not saying that we're all going to agree on this or that we should since we are discussing morals. Sometimes, as Alex was saying, it's hard to believe there are different perspectives. To have one view and say 'I can't see any other' is kind of dangerous in a democracy.

I think there are several issues to notice in this exchange. The central theme of this section of discussion is clearly "choice," specifically individual moral choice. That, for Joe, is the key to Antigone, the reason he chose it in the first place, and a key idea he feels students must assimilate or learn. "Students don't realize they are making choices everyday. The discussion from Greg today when he said, 'Well, if the president says you have to fight in a war, you have to go. You don't have a choice.' That scares me."

Joe expressed concern when we talked after this lesson that he had been too controlling of the discussion. "I wanted it to be a student discussion, and it was very difficult at that stage to keep my perspective out of it." Joe is of an age when the issues surrounding the Vietnam war were real to him, not issues of merely historical interest as they are to today's students. I noted that the discussion was a very different one from the one we had in classrooms in the late 1960s. And finally, I note that Joe skirts some difficult moral issues like breaking the law if it offends an individual conscience. In some communities, his inferred attitude would be considered insurrectional, but this elaborates my point about being in touch with the

community's standards and being an accepted member in good standing. He can ask students to examine their values where another teacher might not get away with it even in our community.

If I were to apply Joe's criteria for a successful discussion, i.e., something you can feel in your gut, one that energizes you, this example was a good classroom discussion. It was clear that there was energy in the atmosphere. The students were thinking about the issues and were being challenged. And Joe clearly cares about these issues of choice and individual moral decision-making. Nothing in his language, in the transcript cited above, suggests that he was anything other than the level-headed moderator of a discussion. But his intonation and his body language showed that it was important to him that students deal seriously with these questions, argue well, and hear each other out. He is constantly teaching even if he makes it look very easy. This accomplishment is harder than it looks. He turned his body to face Alex squarely then warned him, "Careful, Alex." He warned Greg to listen to his own logic.

I conclude from this that good classroom discussion and good reading of texts occur when teachers hit upon that part of the reading, that part of the concept that is vitally important to both students and teacher. It is a search for an intersection of interests. It is the fork in the road in the journey where both students and teachers care passionately about what's around the next turn.

Apparently, Joe thought the intersection would lie in a feminist reading, and so he introduced his survey and the group work on gender issues. But this group of middle-class suburbanites of both genders do not bite on the idea that mythology is a sexist literature. These young women, whose field hockey team has just won a New York State Championship, do not feel left out of the mainstream. Oh, they can discuss the issues of who should do the dishes, but they are not convinced that their lot in life is an unfair one. Just the contrary. So Joe, experienced as he is, seized on another intersection, another way into the text: the issue of justice and unfair punishment. He linked the students' passion for Pete's situation with his own (I suspect preferred) reading of Antigone.

I am thinking about this experience as I am having a discussion with our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum. He is reviewing English curriculum with me and asking if we give departmental exams in required courses such as American Literature, Writers' Workshop, introductory writing, and a basic literature course called Forms of Literature. We do not. It is the staff's carefully considered opinion that department exams dilute their ability to test according to what they have taught in their individual classes. If we are right about the importance of the teacher finding the intersection between students' passions and teachers' readings, if discussion is indeed spaghetti sauce, then Julius Caesar in Miss Jones' class will be very different from Julius Caesar in Mr. Smith's. And it should be. This concept seems an important concept to me.

Forgive that brief aside. Let's return to the conversation with Joe. As we talked, Joe decided his role in this kind of discussion where students seem to be rolling along on their own was that of leader of a symphony orchestra. "A piece of music may be the same each time. Each player has a part. My function is essentially the same. To let each group that wants to be heard be heard so that one group doesn't drown out the others. The tubas may come on too loud. We still want to hear the flutes. And to keep it moving. But the reading of the music is going to be different with each group. Sometimes it works better than other times. There will be differences in the production as we move from rehearsal to performance." I wondered about

that image.

It was then it occurred to me that Joe functions in his classroom less as orchestra leader and more as wise counselor and guide, the mentor that many of the mythological heroes had to accompany them on their journeys. He is King Arthur's Merlin. He is Dante's Virgil. And he unwittingly affirmed that later in a conversation when he acknowledged, "I see as my role just being the road sign. I'm directing them, the student, to an area. They're going to go to that area and find what they're looking for." That works. Remember in the exchange above how he reshaped Alex's "little commie" comment into what was an acceptable response? Joe wanted that perspective stated, but as gentle mentor, he had to insist on its being stated acceptably. He is taking these students on a journey. He, like Virgil, has been there before them. Like Merlin, he seems almost magical, dropping in on their discussions at the moment he is needed. How does he know? He is patient. He is knowledgeable. The students trust him to be a worthy and reliable guide. They accept his judgments. He points out sights and important signs along the way. He is aware that these young Arthurs and Dantes will not notice everything, that they will need prodding. Moreover, Merlin cannot become king and Virgil cannot go all the way into Paradise with Dante. These mentor-guides must stop short, just as Joe must launch these students into the real world, their Camelots, their paradises.

This discussion class is lively, and Joe decides to use the journals for a closure activity. "Take out your journals. In the minute or so that remains, react to what we just did, some of the arguments you just heard and how you feel about them, some personal reactions. If you have specific questions, ask them. We saw five cases in which people broke the law, and yet our jury exonerated some and found some guilty. Does that make you rethink any of the cases? The Antigone situation? We're going to be doing a paper on some of your journal writings."

While the jury votes, Joe walks around and encourages kids to make thoughtful journal entries. They're not going to get off the hook, even in the last minutes of this class. It's productive right up til the final bell.

After the Reading

Friday's class, the fifth one, began with the pre-show warm up from Joe. "I want you all to smile so that now that we've completed the movie hit, Myth I, we will be ready to come out with a sequel, Myth II. So think of what you want to be called when we do the credits." Some of the students look puzzled. Are they really going to make a movie?

For this class, they are back in their classroom. It is humming with activity. There are posters of mythological characters, a bust of Julius Caesar made of papier mache and dressed in a toga, student art work, and projects from their hero research reports. These are the travel posters that enliven their journey.

This class begins with a review of the end of the play. Students are instructed to write in their journals: "This time please call up what happened in the play and then take a minute or two reacting to the ending. How did you feel about the ending? Did you think the outcome was well deserved? Were you upset by it? Please put that in writing."

Students respond well. They appear to have read the ending as assigned even though the assignments are given fairly casually at the end of the class period. I couldn't get away with

that. Joe gives them instructions for the next activity. "We've spent some time talking about the issues of justice and punishment. We took a little bit of time at the beginning to look at specific lines when we were talking about characters. What I'd like you to do is get together in groups of three or four and come up with five or six questions from the whole play, questions of importance. If you were going to write a review, what are some questions you would like to have answered." (Does he mean "review" as review for a test? I don't think so because he's not planning a test. Does he mean "review" as in review of a play? More important, how do the students hear the word "review" in these instructions?) Joe continues, "Focus on what you felt was important. If you have questions about what happened in the play, this is the perfect place to raise them. In the group, come up with some kind of consensus about what's important. Remember we are not looking for specific recall. I don't want to know who Antigone's fiancè was. We can just check that in the text. Anything you see as important, worthy of asking us about. Also any points that need clarification."

Students select others to work with and break into groups of four. I turned a tape recorder on for two group discussions, one I judged to be a "serious" group and one that seemed to be, how shall I say, relatively less academically oriented. I wanted to see exactly what happens when students work in small discussion groups since it is an idea that both Joe and I feel is important to experiment with in classrooms. The conclusion I come to after studying the transcripts of the two groups is that, although Joe was somewhat disappointed in the quality of the discussion, he got, ironically, exactly what he asked for.

One student group I recorded was very businesslike. Mark, who is president of Key Club and seemingly a natural leader, took charge immediately. The early discussion in the group was dominated by Mark and another seemingly bright student, Ann. Later, two other more reticent students dominated the discussion. The early discussion was on task: students raised "deep" questions and did not answer them. About midway into the discussion, however, they speculated on answers to their questions. When the two shyer students chimed in, they tended to ask questions about events that they probably should have known. There is a rather lengthy (and very funny) discussion about the relationships between Jocaste, Creon, and Oedipus. In trying to decide who is related to whom and how, the conversation takes on a "who's on first?" flavor. Let's listen in on this group and look at the questions the group raised and the information they shared even though this was not part of their task. They were only to raise questions, remember, and clarify.

The group raised eight questions although they were only instructed to raise five or six:

1. What happened to Ismene?

2. Does it seem fair that Creon goes on to live at the end of the play?

3. I don't understand the thing about the chorus. Is it somebody who is really there or is it somebody who is there for the effect of the play? Choragos is a person, right?

4. I don't understand these poems. These ode things. Why are they there?

5. Do you get a lot of this stuff here? (Reading aloud from the strophe and antistrophe of the chorus.) It sounds like they're whining or something.

6. But see, I don't get this. Mr. Allen said they (the brothers) were both rulers, but one guy just took the throne and kept it. The other guy was just trying to get it back. Why is that so bad?

7. What are the relationships between Creon, Jocaste, Oedipus? (This question was not phrased this way. It took a lot of discussion to get it out and get the relationships straightened out.)

8. What about this prophet guy (Teresias)? What makes him so special that makes Creon realize he's wrong and want to (change his plan of action)?

Now at first glance, these might appear to be disappointing questions to the trained reader of literature. They may seem to be basic or elementary. But if we assume that these questions are the legitimate concerns of these students, we are honor-bound to take them seriously. Take the first question, for example, it appears to be a plot question. But it is not. We are not told, you will recall, what does happen to Ismene. She simply drops out of the play. And, in fact, she apparently drops out of mythology, for there seem to be no other stories in which she is a character. Now we often tell students that good literature does not have extraneous elements just as a machine does not have extraneous parts. The questions really are: What is Ismene's function in the play? Is she merely a sounding board for Antigone? Does she show how the compliant woman acts? Or is her presence a mark of a flaw on Sophocles' reputation as playwright?

Interestingly, almost every group raised the question about Ismene. That is not surprising if we recall that when students were responding at the very beginning of the play, they were interested in the sibling relationships and how they would come out. Their expectations and curiosities were aroused and not satisfied. Is the play flawed?

The second question is, if rephrased, a good teacherly question: Is the ending of the play justified and satisfactory? Critics deal with this question often. In our sample student group, the question is not phrased in critical or scholarly terms, but it potentially is a "good" and fruitful question.

The series of questions about the function of the chorus, of choragos, the strophe and antistrophe, and of Teresias, the blind prophet, are certainly ones that most teachers of Greek drama would handle and are most certainly likely to be represented in the typical questions at the end of the reading, questions often called "For Further Thought" or some such thing. Joe felt bad that these questions came up from the group and he hadn't dealt with matters peculiar to Greek drama. But what difference does it make if the information is given out before the reading (as is the usual procedure, I suspect) or if the questions are answered when they are raised by students? Some of us who are parents know that information (about sexual matters, for example) given out before children are ready to accept it isn't processed anyway. The series of questions about Oedipus/Creon/Jocaste proves that point. Apparently this student, although he had heard the myth of Oedipus in the previous unit, simply had not processed that information until this point in his reading and thinking.

Now let's take a look at the information that <u>was</u> exchanged in this information about form and formalist concerns:

1. The play is a tragedy and as such sets up certain expectations in the reader. (These are not the students' words, but my rephrasing of their points.)

2. The play is written in poetry, and as such, sets up certain expectation in the reader.

Information specific to Greek drama:

3. The chorus may be functioning as the counsel to the king. It shows what the townspeople are thinking. It foreshadows the "bad" happenings that are forthcoming. The strophe and antistrophe are songs, one a statement and one a reaction to the statement. (This last information about strophe and antistrophe was supplied by the teacher who was called over to the group when they were stalled.)

Information about character and their motivations:

4. Creon is not a likable character, but he is not supposed to be. He is "stuck in his ways," "afraid to give in to her" for fear he will lose his power as ruler.

5. Both Creon and Antigone have undesirable characteristics.

Information about the background myth and allusion:

6. The group manages to straighten out the Creon/Jocaste/Oedipus relationship for the confused member of the group. There is some discussion about modern laws and incest, too.

In a conversation with Joe about the groups, he expressed some disappointment that students had not gone outside the text more. I suspect he hoped that they would make some connections between the civil disobedience discussion and the play as a whole. Apparently that was Joe's agenda, not students', for they did not, in the two groups I recorded, make reference to the previous discussion. They did go outside the text, however. The group I characterized as the relatively unacademic group raised issues about the mythological Furies and how they might seek revenge for the killing of a family member.

After small groups had time to prepare and discuss their five or six questions, Joe called the entire class together for a report-out session. Each group was to submit one question to the entire class for consideration as a closure type of discussion. Some moderate discussion followed each of the questions, but it was Joe's opinion that the most information was passed on in the small group discussions. To that extent, he was pleased with the small groups. Joe intervened in the large group discussion to interject questions that he thought were important, such as the function of the prophet Teresias.

Earlier, I said that Joe got what he asked for. In fact, teachers often do get exactly what they ask for. Although he was disappointed in the level of the discussion and the complexity of the questions asked, he did in fact ask students to raise questions "suitable for a review." Although he warned them against questions that could be answered by looking at the

text, students have to infer that the teacher is looking for interpretive questions. No doubt students need a lot of practice in framing the kind of question that leads to interpretation. As these students spend more time in collaborative discussion groups, and if they are given examples and models of the kinds of questions that lead to interpretation, I have confidence that they can generate the kind of question that Joe was hoping for. In the meantime, what they did do is exactly what Joe asked for: they raised questions that were important to them and they clarified any points in the text that remained unclear to them.

Mark, the student leader in the one taped group, spoke of his concept of the role of small discussion groups. "He (the teacher) doesn't really have a role in the smaller group. Four or five people get together. There we talk about our writing or what we have read. It works out (that) you get a few more ideas or more opinions out to each other than you can in a big group, especially if you know the people well. You can share or express your opinions easier if they are friends of yours and you know who they are, if you are aware of who you are working with. If it's a smaller group, you get to work closer with people." I wonder if the student confused about Oedipus would have dared to ask that question before the whole class. I doubt it.

I want to talk about the conflict Joe and many experienced teachers, especially those committed to reader response theory and collaborative learning, struggle with over control: Does control rest with the teacher or with the students? Joe felt he may have exerted too much control in the large group discussion, especially about Vietnam and too little in the small discussion group. "I was aware of the camera, and I wanted them to do their own questioning in their groups. Normally, I would join a group and ask: 'Did you notice this? Have you thought about that?'"

This same conflict or tension works out when he designs a final closure topic, a paper; he does not intend to give a test. Students are to imagine a character from Antigone having a conversation with one of the non-fictional characters who were reported on in class. Joe tells students in his written directions that he is looking for the students to assume the voice of a character from the play. Greg, a student in the "non-academic" group has Haimon talk to Martin Luther King. In the course of his dialogue, Joe notes on Greg's paper that he does a nice job of summarizing Creon's argument from Haimon's point of view. This is not a traditional "literary" essay, but he was pleased with the results. Students were able to pull together ideas about the non-fictional characters and the dramatic characters. In addition, they demonstrated writing skills, specifically the ability to assume the voice of a character from the play.

Joe is uncomfortable with the idea of students designing their own tasks although the idea seems to me consistent with his commitment to collaborative learning. "I've had them (students) write in their journals each day about Antigone. I thought about the idea of having them select some questions from their journal or some idea that they came up in one of their discussions as the basis for a paper, but I'm nervous about it. I haven't done that very much. I'm afraid they'd come up with a very simple idea and it would take an awful lot of conferencing with me to focus on an idea that they could do in an essay successfully, to do some kind of closure on Antigone." He speculates that there may be a way to get both an excellent essay that represents closure AND an essay that is generated from the students own questions and ideas. "Perhaps by offering an option. I could say, 'Do this essay or select one of your own.' Because I frequently give them the essay topic ahead of time so they can start

pulling some specifics, as I did this time. Perhaps I could alter the concept and invite them to come up with their own topics." This dilemma which seems to me related to the issue of where control rests, with students or with the teacher, continues to perplex Joe.

Finally, what shall we say about Joe as a teacher and about the issues raised by watching him teach? Joe is in that stage in the development of a teacher that occurs between the years when a teacher is learning the craft and discovering himself and the later years before burnout. It is the stage where teachers identify, develop, and expand their individual teaching styles. Clearly Joe is confident enough in his own teaching to design his own courses and choose his own texts rather than depend, as many new teachers must, on whatever is on the shelf. Further, he is adept enough as a teacher-critic to make almost infinite choices about how he will approach a given work with a given group. He is continuing to add to his teaching repertoire by researching and experimenting to find styles and strategies that work for him, that fit. He is continually learning, as he does as he reads about and experiments with collaborative learning even though he is not entirely comfortable with its full implications. We've seen the myriad decisions that an experienced teacher makes: when to acknowledge a student response, how to validate it, how to reshape it, how to encourage it; how to pass out information obliquely when it seems most timely; how to assess a group's interests and concerns and to adapt to them; how to let go of personal ego involvement and let students take control of some parts of the reading process. We are watching an experienced and talented teacher at work. He thinks fast and well, but he is not ever entirely satisfied with his performance or students' results, and he is continually questioning, constantly wondering. There just aren't any constants in this business. But I can say confidently, I would love it if my grandchildren could have him for a mentor-guide.

Videotape Studies of Classroom Discussion (a series of reports). Six teacher-researchers, working collaboratively with university faculty, videotaped literature lessons of English teachers perceived by their colleagues to be outstanding. Subsequently, the researchers wrote interpretive analyses of their observations. Each narrative is available separately.

2.2 Teaching Literature in High School: A Teacher Research Project.
Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch, $3.00.

This paper develops the theoretical framework for the teacher-research projects, and justifies such projects as an essential part of educational inquiry.

2.3 Taking the Fear Away from Learning.
Ann Connolly, $4.00.

In this case study of an all female classroom in a private school setting, Connolly describes instructional experiences that differ considerably from those experienced in her own public school classroom.

2.4 A Journey of Great Expectations: Charles Dickens Meets the Ninth Grade: A Teacher-Researcher Discovers Life in Another Classroom.
Tricia Hansbury, $4.00.

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Carol Forman-Pemberton, $4.00.

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cs Roseanne DeFabio, $4.00.

This report explores one teacher's conviction that guided response to literary texts ultimately makes students better independent readers.

2.8 The Teacher as Mentor-Guide: Joe Allen on Antigone.
Doris Quick, $4.00.

This teacher-researcher describes how the seemingly trivial or obvious questions students ask each other in a nondirected peer group discussion actually constitute a valid and valuable learning experience.